

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 5317

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

LONDON FOR MOOSE AND LAKE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, SF, RH
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: SOUTH AFRICA'S ROLE

REF: STATE 227301

1. LOW AND GRAHAM WILL REPORT THOUGHTS FROM OUR CONVERSATION HERE (INCLUDING DAVID SCOTT) ON SAG ATTITUDES TOWARD FINDING SOLUTION IN RHODESIA. UNFORTUNATELY BRAND FOURIE WAS UNABLE TO KEEP OUR TENTATIVE APPOINTMENT TO BRIEF HIM SEPT 8 AS HE WAS ACCOMPANYING BOTHA TO REPORT ON NAMIBIA TO VORSTER IN CAPE TOWN.

2. I BELIEVE SAG (AS REPRESENTED BY FOURIE AT LEAST) IS GENUINELY CONCERNED AT DETERIORATING SITUATION IN RHODESIA AND WOULD SEE IT AS IN S.A. INTEREST TO COOPERATE IN FURTHERING A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. THIS PROBABLY INCLUDES WILLINGNESS TO APPLY SOME PRESSURE ON RHODESIA IF THERE WERE A CLEARLY AGREED AND (IN SAG EYES) WORKABLE SOLUTION TOWARD WHICH SUCH PRESSURES COULD BE APPLIED. HOWEVER, ABSENT SOME CLEARLY DEFINED PLAN WHICH THEY COULD AGREE WITH, THE SAG WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO ATTEMPT ANY USE OF ITS INFLUENCE WITH RHODESIA. (THE SOUTH
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AFRICANS JUDGE SUCH INFLUENCE TO BE LIMITED SINCE THEY CONSIDER DRASTIC ECONOMIC PRESSURES TO BE UNACCEPTABLE IN ANY CASE.)

3. THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE SAG CABINET IS NOT FULLY UNITED ON EITHER THE RHODESIAN OR NAMIBIAN ISSUES, AND WITHOUT FIRM LEADERSHIP FROM THE PRIME MINISTER, WHOSE CURRENTLY POOR HEALTH SEEMS TO CAST SOME DOUBT ON HOW ACTIVE A ROLE HE WILL PLAY, IT IS

UNLIKELY TO ENTERTAIN ANY INITIATIVES THAT ARE NOT POLITICALLY "SAFE" AT HOME. NONE OF THE CABINET IS LIKELY IN THE BEST OF TIMES TO RISK TAKING AN ACTION THAT MIGHT BE REGARDED AS UNDERCUTTING THE POSITION OF RHODESIA'S WHITE POPULATION, ESPECIALLY IF THERE IS A DANGER OF THINGS GETTING WORSE IF THE POLICY DOES NOT WORK.

4. A YEAR AGO WHEN SECRETARY VANCE AND OWEN MET PIK BOTHA IN LONDON, THE IMPLIED THREAT OF WESTERN SUPPORT FOR SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA ON THE RHODESIAN ISSUE HAD A CERTAIN DEGREE OF CREDIBILITY. THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, HOWEVER, DID NOT INVOLVE TO THE POINT WHERE DIRECT PRESSURE ON SMITH VIA THE SOUTH AFRICANS WOULD HAVE BEEN APPROPRIATE OR POLITICALLY FEASIBLE. THEN IN DECEMBER, 1977, SMITH VEERED INTO HIGH GEAR DOWN THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT TRACK.

5. UNTIL IT BECAME MORE OBVIOUS THAT THE RHODESIAN SITUATION WAS DETERIORATING, THE SOUTH AFRICANS CONTINUED TO WELCOME CLOSE CONSULTATIONS FROM US ON THE RHODESIAN PROBLEM, AND WERE APPARENTLY WILLING EVEN TO CARRY OUT THEIR OWN CONSULTATIONS WITH THE RHODESIANS. THEY DID NOT SEEM LIKELY, HOWEVER, TO PUT THEIR ADVICE VERY STRONGLY TO THE RHODESIANS UNLESS IT WERE IN ACCORDANCE WITH A PLAN THEY HAD SOME SAY IN SHAPING, AND AN OUTCOME THEY HAD SOME CONFIDENCE IN ACHIEVING.

6. TODAY, THE SAG PROBABLY ASSESSES THE POSSIBILITY OF THE US OR
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THE UK GOVERNMENTS BEING POLITICALLY ABLE TO APPLY SANCTIONS TO SOUTH AFRICA ON RHODESIA, AS RELATIVELY SMALL. AT THE SAME TIME, THE SAG APPEARS TO RECOGNIZE THE FUNDAMENTAL FAILURE OF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT AND THE FACT THAT SMITH'S ECONOMIC, MILITARY, AND POLITICAL SITUATION, AND THUS HIS BARGAINING POSITION, HAVE DETERIORATED SIGNIFICANTLY. AS A RESULT, THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT ESCALATION OF THE RHODESIAN CONFLICT, ITS INTERNATIONALIZATION, AND THE EVENTUAL COLLAPSE OF THE WHITE REGIME. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SOUTH AFRICANS APPARENTLY HAVE NO INTENTION OF ATTEMPTING TO BAIL SMITH OUT MILITARILY OR ECONOMICALLY. THUS, EVEN THOUGH THE THREAT OF SANCTIONS IS REDUCED, THE SAG COULD BE MORE AMENABLE TO USE ITS LEVERAGE TO PRESS SMITH IN A NEW DIRECTION THAN ANYTIME SINCE 1976.

7. OF THE OPTIONS THAT WOULD APPEAR TO BE AVAILABLE TO SMITH AT THIS POINT, MOST OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LEADERSHIP VERY LIKELY PREFERS THE NKOMO GAMBIT. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE IT, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THE SOUTH AFRICANS HAVE ENCOURAGED SMITH TO TRY TO MAKE A DEAL WITH NKOMO. BUT THE SAG OBJECTIVE OF SEEING A BLACK GOVERNMENT IN RHODESIA WHICH WOULD BE AS MODERATE AS POSSIBLE AND IN WHICH WHITE INFLUENCE WOULD BE AS LARGE AS

POSSIBLE, IS PARALLELED BY AN INTEREST PERCEIVED BY PIK BOTHA AND OTHERS, IN SEEING THAT THE REGIME WILL BE AN EFFECTIVE ONE AND CAPABLE OF ENDING THE CONFLICT.

8. WE COULD IMPROVE THE PROSPECTS OF INVOLVING THE SAG IN DIRECT EFFORTS TO MOVE SMITH TO AN ALL-PARTIES SETTLEMENT IF WE COULD BRING SOUTH AFRICA INTO THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A SETTLEMENT FORMULA BASED ON THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN. WE COULD NOT, OF COURSE, MAKE THE SAG A PARTNER IN THIS ENTERPRISE, BUT WE COULD CONSULT CLOSELY WITH THEM ON ANY PROPOSAL WE HAVE IN MIND. TO BE SALEABLE HERE, IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO PICTURE THE PROPOSAL AS A MODIFICATION OF THE MARCH 3 AGREEMENT, OR A MARRYING OF THAT AGREEMENT WITH THE AAP. INTEGRATION OF THE LIBERATION FORCES INTO THE NEW ZIMBABWE ARMY WILL PROBABLY CAUSE THE MOST CONFIDENTIAL

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DIFFICULTY FOR ANY CLOSE SAG IDENTIFICATION WITH THE PROPOSAL. NEVERTHELESS, IT SEEMS AT LEAST POSSIBLE THAT WE MIGHT BRING THE SAG ALONG. CERTAINLY IT IS WORTH TRYING. TO THIS END, WE MAY WISH TO CONSIDER ANOTHER UNOBTRUSIVE VANCE-OWEN-BOTHA MEETING.

9. REGRET THAT POWER SHORTAGE AND TRANSMISSION PROBLEMS HAVE DELAYED OUR SENDING THIS ANALYSIS BEFORE START OF MOOSE-LAKE TALKS WITH OWEN IN LONDON.
EDMONDSON

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